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SUBJECT: Outreach to Propel the Reform Process

REFS: (A) Nairobi 2376 (B) Nairobi 2133

¶1. Summary. This message summarizes recent travel throughout Kenya as part of continuing and intensified outreach efforts aimed at encouraging domestic-driven peaceful pressure for implementation of the reform agenda. End summary.

¶2. The Mission remains engaged in intense outreach to all regions, political constituencies, and ethnic communities of Kenya in an effort to encourage peaceful popular pressure to implement the reform agenda. The Ambassador is averaging a trip at least every two weeks, and officers from the political section, economic section, public affairs, and USAID are even more frequently in the field. The visits include, to varying degrees, contacts with civil society; discussions with local officials, elders, and community leaders; town hall-style meetings; outreach to youth; and engaging with local radio, as well as providing support for specific USG projects. Refs A and B, respectively, reported travel by the Ambassador and a Mission team to the north Rift Valley, and to north-central Kenya.

¶3. Outreach in recent months has included trips to Nyanza Province, south and north Rift Valley, Eastern Province, and Central Province.

There has also been extensive outreach in Muslim areas (reported separately).

¶4. Members of Parliament are showing an increasing interest in traveling with the Ambassador and his team, as reflected in three of the trips. In Sotik, in Rift Valley Province, Orange Democratic Movement MP Joyce Laboso participated. She joined the Ambassador at a town hall meeting with the local people, and agreed to answer questions. (Standard practice by Kenyan politicians is to address a set-piece meeting, and then to depart without any dialogue having taken place.) In Mutito, in Eastern Province, Orange Democratic Movement-K MP Kiama Kilonzo joined the Ambassador for a large town hall meeting with local youth, and also agreed - albeit reluctantly - to answer questions. During the visit to Sotik the Ambassador participated in an hour-long call-in radio show. In Githunguri and Kiambu, in Central Province, the Ambassador participated in a town hall meeting with several hundred young people and local community leaders. After greeting the Ambassador, local Party of National Unity MP Njoroge Baiya backed out of his commitment to participate in the town hall meeting. (Few parliamentarians are willing to risk a real give-and-take dialogue with an assembly of citizens, particularly when they know that tough questions will be raised about local development, corruption, and the reform agenda.)

¶5. The town hall meetings and a wide range of other contacts (including impromptu encounters in markets and other places) reveals that ordinary Kenyan citizens are generally aware of the reform agenda and want to see change, particularly through action against corruption and bringing about of a new constitution. Those participating in the town hall meeting in Central Province were particularly scathing about the government, noting that though the Kikuyu elite control much of the country's wealth, citizens perceive that very little trickles down to the grassroots.

¶6. The feedback we are receiving through e-mails, letters, text messages, on our face book and twitter sites, and verbally remains

extremely positive about this continuing outreach. Kenyans correctly see the outreach as part of U.S. efforts to press for implementation of reforms. Many Kenyans note that they are hungry for such dialogue and frustrated by their leaders' inability or unwillingness to do the same. The impact of the outreach efforts and the fact that growing pressure coming from Kenyans for change is being felt by politicians are reflected in the fact that we are receiving extensive requests for visits and that reform-minded parliamentarians are increasingly willing to participate alongside us.

¶ 7. Of particular interest is the fact that in all of these outreach activities we are receiving enthusiastic support from local officials, the administrative police, elders, and other community leaders. In almost all instances they are working with our advance teams to organize truly open town hall meetings, and are themselves participating in the meetings. In most cases community leaders want to see change (in terms of reforms, anti-corruption activities, and genuine poverty alleviation development programs) and are highly skeptical about their leaders' willingness to deliver.

¶ 8. We will continue these outreach activities as part of a broader integrated effort to propel implementation of the reform agenda.

RANNEBERGER